Commonly Misused Words

Accept, Except:

Accept is a verb meaning to receive. Except is usually a preposition signifying exclusion.

Example: I will accept all the packages except that one.

Except is also a verb meaning to exclude.

Example: Please, except that item from the list.

Affect, Effect:

Affect is usually a verb meaning to influence. Effect is usually a noun meaning result.

Example: The drug did not affect the disease, and it had several adverse side effects.

Effect can also be a verb meaning to bring about.

Example: Only the president can effect such a dramatic change.

There, Their, They’re:

There is an adverb specifying place; it is also an expletive. (Ex: There is a wasp in here.)

Their is an adjective specifying possession. (Ex: Their love will last forever.)

They’re is a contraction combining “they” and “are.” (Ex: I love these socks because they’re so soft.)

To, Too, Two:

To is a preposition. (Ex: Sally goes to school.)

Too is an adverb. (Ex: Brandon is too young for school.)

Two is a number. (Ex: He is only two years old.)

Your, You’re:

Your is a possessive pronoun.

You’re is a contraction of “you” and “are.”

Example: You’re going to catch a cold if you don’t wear your coat.

Hint: Sound out “you are” in the sentence. If it works in the sentence, it can be written as you’re. If it sounds awkward, it is probably supposed to be your.

Example: You’re shoes are muddy. “You are shoes are muddy.” That doesn’t work, so it should be written as “Your shoes are muddy.”

Lie, Lay:

Lie means “to recline or rest on a surface.” Its principal parts are lie, lay, lain.

Lay means “to put or place.” Its principal parts are lay (present), laid (past).

Hint: Chickens lay eggs. I lie down when I am tired.

Who, Which, That:

Which and That should refer to things, not people. (In some cases, that may be used in reference to a group of people)

Who should be used to refer to a person or people.